

Fresno students will protest spending cuts

Lieutenant governor encourages them to make voices heard.

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By Eddie Jimenez

Fresno State freshman Andreina Ochoa got the message from Lt. Gov. John Garamendi and educators Wednesday about how cuts in education spending could hurt her and her peers.

And she is ready to take action.

California is on an "intellectual downturn," and the more than \$5 billion in proposed cuts for education would further that decline, Garamendi told a class at California State University, Fresno.

Garamendi and the educators urged students to let Gov. Schwarzenegger and the Legislature know that education cutbacks would be a mistake.

"I hope you take this information and get really upset, really angry," Garamendi said.

Ochoa, a 19-year-old psychology major from Monterey County, said she was glad to hear a state official such as Garamendi talk about trying to protect education from cuts.

"At first I thought it wasn't a major concern for them," Ochoa said.

She said she would sign up for a bus trip to a student rally Monday at the state Capitol in Sacramento. A march is also planned in downtown Los Angeles.

Students from Fresno will travel north to tell the governor and legislators that they need to make education a priority, said Juan Pablo Moncayo, president of Associated Students Inc., the university's student government.

The proposed budget reductions would cut \$4.8 billion from kindergarten through 12th grade and from community colleges and another \$645 million from the University of California and California State University systems, according to Garamendi's office.

The governor's proposal to cut 10% across the board because of the state's multibillion-dollar deficit is "not prioritizing," Moncayo said.

Every \$1 spent on the California State University system generates \$4.41 in taxes paid by graduates, said Lynette Nyaggah, a linguistics instructor at Rio Hondo Community College in Whittier.

"You're all a good investment," Nyaggah told the students.

Panelists for the forum, held in a critical-thinking class, spoke about student fee increases in recent years that make obtaining a college degree harder.

Politicians don't want to talk about taxes, said professor Victor Torres, who teaches the class, but increasing fees is essentially "a back-door tax."

Nyaggah said some of her students work full time and can only attend night classes, which often are the first to be cut. Those students sometimes don't return to school.

"When we cut, some of you may fall by the wayside," she said.